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CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR  
10 MAY 1983

# Pakistan questions US desire for Afghan settlement

## Islamabad troubled by White House leaks to press on US aid to rebels

By Mary Anne Weaver  
Special to The Christian Science Monitor

New Delhi

Reports that the United States has stepped up its aid to Afghan resistance fighters have embarrassed Pakistan.

"The timing could not have been more inappropriate," a foreign diplomat said of the official leaks coming out of Washington last week.

The leaks, which referred to accelerated arms deliveries to the Pakistan-based guerrillas, came at a time when it appears there may be progress in the Geneva talks sponsored by the United Nations. The talks are aimed at forging a political settlement of the war in Afghanistan.

"It either portends total American insensitivity," said the foreign diplomat concerning the leaks, "or more Machiavelian motives were involved. It's long been recognized that there are voices within the American administration which have never supported the Geneva dialogue."

Despite the caution voiced by diplomatic officials, more and more straws are flying in the wind that progress was registered in Geneva in the April round of indirect talks between the Soviet-backed regime in Afghanistan and Pakistan. And it appears that both sides — essentially the Soviets and the Pakistanis — have begun preparing the groundwork for what could be a final settlement on the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.

[Two leading Afghan rebel leaders have denounced the UN-sponsored talks, according to Reuters. "Our jihad (holy war) does not rely on Pakistan or any other countries," Maulvi Younis Khaless, head of the rebel group Hezb-i-Islami, said. "Unless we are in the negotiations the efforts are useless," he said.]

Moscow has long been pressuring the Pakistani government to halt the flow of communications equipment, supplies, and arms through Pakistan's dusty frontier town of Peshawar — where six Afghan resistance organizations are based — then through the Khyber Pass and the tribal territories into Afghanistan. The Kremlin has also protested the use of Peshawar, and Pakistan's unpatrolled tribal tracts, as staging areas for mujahideen attacks.

Thus, it does not seem a coincidence, to diplomatic observers here, that the White House leak followed an early April directive from the Pakistan government to the mujahideen. The directive said the resistance groups must move their headquarters out of Peshawar and be dispersed along the Afghan frontier.

No deadline was set by the Islamabad government, but as the war of covert action went on, Moscow responded with its own leakage from Kabul over the weekend. According to a report of an official Indian news agency, the dispersal of the Afghan refugees would coincide with a withdrawal of Soviet forces from the Pakistani border, and their redeployment in the interior of Afghanistan.

The simultaneous withdrawal of forces, according to the United News of India report, was "virtually settled" in Geneva. September was given as the tentative beginning date.

According to diplomatic officials closely monitoring the Geneva talks, such a dispersal would create the demilitarized zone that the Soviets sought in Geneva, a *cordon sanitaire*. The Red Army and the beleaguered Afghan forces could begin their withdrawal through such a zone, with the disarmed refugees moving into it for repatriation from Pakistan and Iran.

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It may be wishful thinking, but even cautious diplomats agree that it could portend a breakthrough — and one more building block in place for an eventual Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan.

[In a Sunday press conference, however, General Zia dismissed reports that Soviet troops would withdraw from Afghanistan's border areas by summer's end, according to Reuters. "There is no confirmation at all of such news," he said, "and according to me it is all propaganda."]

There are other elements to a possible settlement as well.

According to weekend reports from Peshawar, the Soviet Army — in an unprecedented mid-April move — signed a truce with the wily rebel commander of the northern Panjshir Valley, Ahmed Shah Masoud. The truce, which came after three weeks of intensive fighting, will reportedly include a withdrawal of Soviet forces from key areas of the valley, through which the main highway passes connecting the Soviet Union and Kabul.

And the beleaguered Afghan regime of Babrak Karmal, which does nothing without Moscow's advice and support, quietly expelled the sons of Pakistan's late Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto from Kabul last week, obviously attempting to remove another irritant in its relations with Pakistan. Since 1980, the brothers, Murtaza and Shah Nawaz Bhutto, have used the Afghan capital as headquarters for the "Al-Zulfikar" terrorist group, and from there directed the group's bombings, arson, a jetliner hijacking, and attempted assassinations inside Pakistan.

[In a related development, the Afghan government expelled a senior US diplomat, Peter Graham, from the American embassy in Kabul — the first such expulsion order against an American since the Soviet occupation in 1979. The expulsion follows the recent arrest of a dozen of the US embassy's Afghan employees. In retaliation, the US State Department announced Monday that it has ordered the expulsion of a diplomat from Afghanistan's Washington embassy.]

For its part the Pakistani government — as diplomats assembled in the ornate splendor of Geneva's Grand Palais — gave warning to five mujahideen newspapers in Peshawar that all articles must henceforth be submitted for censorship or the papers would have to close. The five newspapers almost immediately stopped their presses.

Whether or not the mujahideen will accept such restrictions, including dispersal of their headquarters into the tribal tracts, is problematic. It is also of crucial importance for Pakistan. Many of the rebel groups are concerned that if dispersed their usefulness as arms conduits to guerrillas inside Afghanistan will be weakened and their contact with visiting dignitaries and the foreign press will be restricted.